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the classes become more advanced they should learn something of the shifting of sounds, and should study synonyms and etymology.

Etymological comparison, however, is recommended only for advanced students and skilful, well-informed teachers. Words like *Knabe*, knave; *haben*, have; *sterben*, starve; *über*, over; *geben*, give, might be chosen. Like the German word *essen*, OHG *ezzan*, English "to eat," Anglo-Saxon *etan*, common words may be traced through their various stages of development.

In closing it is important to note that Walter makes a strong plea for much oral work, *repetition*, and the free use of the blackboard, and greatly condemns translation.

By these various methods the student will gradually and systematically learn and make his own all the most important words of the foreign language and none but these. As his vocabulary increases his *Sprachgefühl* will grow and his interest in a language which is being made truly alive and practicable for him as a vehicle of expression will not diminish.

THE STUDY OF SYNONYMS AS AN AID IN THE ACQUISITION OF A VOCABULARY

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A short history of the publications on the subject of synonyms is given by Otto Lyon in his introduction to Eberhard's *Dictionary of Synonyms*, Leipzig: Th. Grieben. In substance he says: The real founder of German synonyms is Samuel Ernst Stosch, who was the first to give not only a mere table of words but also explanations and distinctions of meaning. He, however, modeled his work, *Investigations of the Right Use of German Words Similar in Meaning*, after Abbé Girard's synonyms which appeared in Paris in 1718. Stosch's careful but too extensive work is based upon an error, which caused many mistakes and contradictions. He assumes that synonyms

are words identical in meaning. In this error, he follows the example of Girard. Even today the French regard them as words absolutely identical. The *dictionary* of the Academy defines a synonym as a word which has the same meaning as another word. The revision of the works on synonyms which the German Society of Mannheim made put aside this erroneous definition and defined them as words *related* in meaning. This society published in 1794 their work known as *Sinnverwandte Wörter*, and revisions of the same followed. All these works however are inferior to Eberhard's *Dictionary of Synonyms*, published in 1802. In closing this preface Lyon adds that formerly a treatise on the worth and significance of synonyms was added to these dictionaries. This, he says, is no longer necessary today, since it seems to be universally recognized at present that a more than superficial knowledge of synonyms assists greatly the power of expressing oneself clearly, easily, and forcibly in any language. Anyone who has ever attempted the mastery of a foreign language can fully appreciate the truth of this statement. We may be able to purchase the necessities, or obtain enough food to sustain life without synonyms, but as soon as we attempt to enter into anything worthy of the name conversation, we meet with serious difficulties. Like the artist who uses the varied colors and many shades to produce the ideal effect, so we must be equipped with a store of words, similar and yet distinct in meaning, to produce the word picture of our thought.

In his *Deutscher Styl*, Lyon gives more specific reasons for the study of synonyms.

In the expression of ideas one must be careful that the thought may not become confused through the use of words of more than one meaning, or through the use of words related in meaning. As to the former, the meaning will usually be clear from the context, but the right use of synonyms like *Stolz* and *Hochmut*, *Bescheidenheit* and *Demut* demands more attention. Because the ideas are related, the words are easily exchanged, and often a thought is expressed which one did not intend. Clearness and conciseness as well as beauty of style demand a careful observation of the fine distinctions of synonyms, which teach us to express and distinguish related ideas by specific words. Whoever fails to distinguish between words like *beschimpfen*,

demütigen, *entehren*, *herabsetzen*, and *erniedrigen*, will continually use these expressions unfittingly and destroy the clearness and beauty of style.

No conscientious student can fail to see the self-evident truth of these assertions as to the value of this study.

The reform method favors defining the foreign word in the foreign language, and giving the English meaning only in extreme cases. The synonyms are also explained and the distinctions made clear in the foreign tongue. Then the student is asked to form sentences containing the new words learned and illustrating their distinctions in meaning. By the time these distinctions have been worked out, the words are indelibly stamped on the mind, without any conscious exertion of the memory, which is certainly a much more interesting method than to commit columns of promiscuous words. It may seem at first a somewhat slow and tedious process, but practical application proves it to be a very rapid as well as satisfactory way. Take for example the two words, *Demut* and *Bescheidenheit*. Whoever fears to overestimate his own worth shows *Demut*, but he who limits himself in his claims, though they are well-grounded, *Bescheidenheit*. This certainly brings a more definite and hence a more lasting impression to our minds, than if we merely define *Demut* as humility and *Bescheidenheit*, modesty. Or again *entehren*, *erniedrigen*, *herabwürdigen*, *demütigen*, *beschimpfen*, and *herabsetzen*. *Erniedrigen* is the most general, and means a diminishing of the outer or inner value of a person. If the value is merely an outward one, for instance, that through which one receives his position in society, the decreasing of it is a *herabsetzen* (lower). *Herabwürdigen* (degrade) refers to the inner value of a person or thing. *Demütigen* (humiliate) adds to the idea of the sufferer's own judgment of his shortcomings. One *beschimpft* that one from whom one takes the signs of honor and to whom one causes others to refuse the signs of honor. *Entehren* is the highest degree of *Erniedrigung*. There are so many words of whose meaning we have only a confused or vague idea and which we never use. When we have once analyzed these carefully and compared them with other words, we feel the right of ownership, and

actually make them our own. We may know *about* a city but not until we have visited its shops and parks and compared it with other cities can we speak of it with a personal interest. With a beginner of course, care would have to be used in the selection of synonyms; only the most simple and striking examples should be chosen, but advanced pupils, with a moderate vocabulary, could easily use a text like Eberhard-Lyon.

A very material aid to the reform method would be the publication of dictionaries, which defined the words in the foreign language, but in simple enough terms to be understood by a beginner. The teacher may be able to remedy the lack by making new, or simplifying, definitions, yet it seems an arduous and unnecessary task. Suppose we take a simple German story and work through it, defining all new words in German and learning their synonyms. We may at first read but half a page a day, yet when we have finished, our vocabulary is many times richer than if we had read it in the usual way. It would be folly to assume that there is no mental effort required in this method, but the large element of interest saves it from being drudgery. The study of synonyms involves also a rigorous mental discipline, and forces one to think in the foreign language, the much-desired goal of every language student. As another by-product might be mentioned a cultivation of feeling for the language. A native imbibes naturally a certain feeling for distinctions in words, but a foreigner must use all the stilts available in order to cultivate this feeling, so that here again we find the study of synonyms invaluable.

Considering the question from both sides, I am thoroughly convinced that this is the right line of procedure for the modern language teacher, if we hope to realize our ideals. The splendid results already obtained are the only recommendation necessary for the method, which is the best, because it is the most natural.